

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

1. (Canceled)

2. (Currently Amended) An information sharing apparatus, which communicates with a plurality of terminals corresponding to a plurality of users respectively, comprising:

a first receiving unit configured to receive an authentication request including authentication information of ~~one of the users~~ a first user;

an authentication unit configured to execute personal authentication by using the authentication information, ~~and to obtain, if the authentication information is authentic, two pass IDs whose values are the same~~ a first pass ID and a second pass ID, wherein a value of the first pass ID is equal to a value of the second pass ID;

a transfer unit configured to transfer one of the ~~two pass IDs~~ first pass ID or the second pass ID as a transferred pass ID to ~~one of the terminals~~ a first terminal which corresponds to the ~~one of the users~~ first user, and store the one of the first pass ID or the second pass ID that is not transferred as a stored pass ID;

a second receiving unit configured to receive ~~[[a]]~~ the transferred pass ID and an information item including an image of a person;

a first generation unit configured to generate a temporary ID for identifying the information item when the transferred pass ID is equal to ~~another of the two pass IDs~~ the stored pass ID;

an extracting unit configured to extract a contour of a person's face from the information item~~[[,]]~~ to detect an image of the person's face as a personal information item;

a second generating unit configured to generate an anonymous information item, which is the information item without the image of the person's face, by separating the detected personal information item from the information item, ~~to obtain (a) the anonymous information item which is the information item including the information item except the image of the person's face and (b) the personal information item corresponding to the image of the person's face;~~

a first storing unit configured to store a pair ~~[[of]]~~ including the temporary ID and a personal ID ~~which corresponds~~ corresponding to the personal information item;

an encrypting unit configured to encrypt the personal information item;

a second storing unit configured to store the encrypted personal information item and the anonymous information item to which the temporary ID and one of a plurality of levels ~~which corresponds~~ corresponding to the personal information item are added, ~~and the encrypted personal information item, and the anonymous information item,~~ the plurality of levels including (a) a first access level which is assigned to a first group of users, the first group of users including ~~of the~~ users who can access only the anonymous information item out of the anonymous information item and the personal information item, and (b) a second access level which is assigned to a second group of users, the second group of users including ~~of the~~ users who can access both of the anonymous information item and the personal information item;

a third receiving unit configured to receive a request message for accessing the information item, the request message being transmitted from ~~another of the terminals~~ a second terminal;

a first transmitting unit configured to transmit only the anonymous information item out of the anonymous information item and the personal information item to the ~~another of the terminals~~ second terminal in response to the request message, when an access level predetermined to a ~~user of the users which corresponds~~ second user corresponding to the ~~another of the terminals~~ second terminal is equal to the first access level;

a synthesizing unit configured to synthesize the personal information item with the anonymous information item to obtain a regenerated information item including the image of the person's face; and

a second transmitting unit configured to transmit the regenerated information item in response to the request message, when the access level of the second user is equal to the second access level.

3. - 7. (Canceled)

8. (Currently Amended) An apparatus according to claim 2, wherein the synthesizing unit includes:

a first acquiring unit configured to acquire the pair based on ~~[[a]]~~ the temporary ID added to the anonymous information item, to obtain the personal ID of the pair; and

a second acquiring unit configured to acquire from the second storing unit, the personal information item which corresponds to the personal ID of the pair and is to be synthesized with the anonymous information item, ~~from the second storing unit~~.

9. (Currently Amended) An apparatus according to claim 2, wherein the second generating unit generates the anonymous information item by overwriting ~~[[into]]~~ an area corresponding to the personal information item with arbitrary symbols.

10. (Canceled)

11. (Currently Amended) A method for sharing acquired information items with a plurality of terminals corresponding to a plurality of users respectively, comprising:

receiving an authentication request including authentication information of ~~one a~~ a first user of the plurality of users;

executing personal authentication by using the authentication information, ~~and to~~ obtain, if the authentication information is authentic, ~~two pass IDs whose values are the same~~ a first pass ID and a second pass ID, wherein a value of the first pass ID is equal to a value of the second pass ID;

transferring one of the ~~two pass IDs~~ the first pass ID or the second pass ID as a transferred pass ID to ~~one of the terminals~~ a first terminal which corresponds to the ~~one of the plurality of first~~ user;

storing one of the first pass ID or the second pass ID that is not transferred as a stored pass ID;

receiving ~~a path~~ the transferred pass ID and an information item including an image of a person;

generating a temporary ID for identifying the information item when the transferred pass ID is equal to ~~another of the two pass IDs~~ the stored pass ID;

extracting a contour of a person's face from the information item~~[[,]]~~ to detect an image of the person's face as a personal information item;

generating an anonymous information item, which is the information item without the image of the person's face, by separating the detected personal information item from the information item, ~~to obtain (a) the anonymous information item which is the information item including the information item except the image of the person's face and (b) the personal information item corresponding to the image of the person's face;~~

storing, in a first memory, a pair ~~[[of]]~~ including the temporary ID and a personal ID ~~which corresponds~~ corresponding to the personal information item;

encrypting the personal information item;

storing, in a second memory, the encrypted personal information item and the anonymous information item to which the temporary ID and one of a plurality of levels which corresponds corresponding to the personal information item are added, ~~and the encrypted personal information item~~, the plurality of levels including (a) a first access level which is assigned to a first group of users, the first group of users including ~~of the~~ users who can access only the anonymous information item out of the anonymous information item and the personal information item, and (b) a second access level which is assigned to a second group of users, the second group of users including ~~of the~~ users

who can access both of the anonymous information item and the personal information item;

receiving a request message for accessing the information item, the request message being transmitted from ~~another of the terminals~~ a second terminal;

transmitting, in response to the request message, only the anonymous information item out of the anonymous information item and the personal information item to the ~~another of the terminals~~ second terminal ~~in response to the request message~~, when an access level predetermined to a second user ~~of the users who corresponds~~ corresponding to the ~~another of the terminals~~ second terminal is equal to the first access level;

synthesizing the personal information item with the anonymous information item, to obtain a regenerated information item including the image of the person's face; and

transmitting, in response to the request message, the regenerated information item ~~in response to the request message~~, when the access level of the second user is equal to the second access level.

12. - 15. (Canceled)

16. (Currently Amended) A method according to claim 11, wherein the synthesizing includes:

acquiring the pair, based on the temporary ID added to the anonymous information item, to obtain the personal ID of the pair; and

acquiring, ~~from the second memory,~~ the personal information item which corresponds to the personal ID of the pair and is to be synthesized with the anonymous information item, ~~from the second memory.~~

17. (Currently Amended) A method according to claim 11, wherein the generating the anonymous information item generates the anonymous information item by overwriting ~~[[into]]~~ an area corresponding to the personal information item with arbitrary symbols.